



Family Participation in Doctor Visits

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Andrew Schorr:

So, Dr. Kolibaba, one of your patients walks in, and they have maybe two people with them who love them very much. They have questions, and they're worried about whether it's—do you welcome that? Do you welcome the family participation? Do you welcome the questions? You're a busy person. You have a waiting room full of people. How can the visit be productive and the involvement of the family—how do you feel about it?

Dr. Kolibaba:

I'm so happy when people bring someone with them. Sometimes they have a lot of questions, and if they do have—if they do, if they're looking for complex information that would take a long time, then it can't be fit into the visit. We'll say, "Gosh, we need to schedule a family meeting to go over this." Usually, you can just bring someone with you, and I'm grateful for the hand signals. When the person says, "Fine." The other guy in the corner goes so much, and they shake their hand. Or they have ways of getting their doctor's attention without the patient knowing it.

The hand signals from the other person in the room are really valuable. It's always good to get information. Often a question or two will clarify things for family. I find there's always time for that. Information is power and understanding and support. The team, the cancer doesn't affect one person. I'm always fine with people coming in.

Sometimes we'll call ahead, seeing a gap in what someone is able to tell us in terms of anything, side effects. Sometimes we don't get enough information from just the patient. Then, Nora's helped with that. Calling spouses and all of that. With respect of the privacy forms that you all fill out. Bringing people with you is a wonderful thing.

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